

**Central Washington University  
Assessment of Student Learning  
Department and Program Report**

Academic Year of Report: 20011–12

College: Interdisciplinary — College of Arts & Humanities

Department: Interdisciplinary Film & Video Studies

Program: FVS Major (Critical Studies & Production Specializations) & Minor

## 1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

Consistent with the desired skills and learning outcomes identified by the Presidents' Council of the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board in the late-1990s (*i.e.*, critical thinking, writing, quantitative reasoning and information literacy), the Film & Video Studies (FVS) program has identified three (3) program goals tied to ten (10) student learning outcomes. Of the ten student learning outcomes, four (4) are shared between the two specializations (*Critical Studies* and *Production*) while each specialization has three (3) specific learning outcomes associated with their unique course of study within the FVS major. Because the FVS program draws its faculty and courses from eight different departments in two separate colleges, the FVS program faculty elected to review the compiled assessment data for all ten student learning outcomes annually in order to obtain a “grand overview” of the interdisciplinary program and to identify specific areas of excellence as well as improvement opportunities.

### Programmatic Goals.

- (I) *Student will achieve visual literacy—the ability to appreciate, interpret, use, & create images using both conventional & digital media in ways that advance innovative learning, collaborative communication, critical thinking, & creative decision making.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Facilitate inter/disciplinary & integrative learning for creative inquiry,” and “Develop students’ intellectual & practical skills for lifelong learning” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).
- (II) *Students will demonstrate themselves to be informed viewers, critics, & consumers of visual information in its various forms & to recognize the cultural & social contexts that shape visual media in various historical periods, including issues of diversity & gender, American national identity, & international perspectives.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Improve students’ knowledge of human cultures & diversity for success in a global society,” and “Enhance students’ civic knowledge & engagement locally & globally for responsible citizenship” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus,” and Goal IV, “Build inclusive and diverse campus communities that promote intellectual inquiry and encourage civility, mutual respect, and cooperation” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).
- (III) *Students will demonstrate themselves to be knowledgeable designers, composers, & producers of visual information, in its various forms, which demonstrates sensitivity to the subject matter & authorial voice as well as mastery of industry standards in production techniques & aesthetics.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Develop students’ intellectual & practical skills for lifelong learning,” and “Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus,” and Goal IV, “Build inclusive and diverse campus communities that promote intellectual inquiry and encourage civility, mutual respect, and cooperation” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).

Student Learning Outcomes. All students are held accountable for the four (4) shared learning outcomes and the three (3) specific learning outcomes relevant to their respective specialization. However, it is anticipated (but not required) that all students will likely demonstrate some level of minimum competencies in all ten (10) of the learning outcomes regardless of their major specialization.

Shared Student Learning Outcomes.

- (1) *Student demonstrates him/herself to be expressive, innovative visual thinker & successful problem solver.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal I and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (2) *Student demonstrates ability to analyze & interpret emotional, psychological, physiological & cognitive influences in perceptions of visual media.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (3) *Student demonstrates an understanding of American &/or International media industries.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (4) *Student demonstrates an understanding of film as a medium of culture & identifies, articulates, & critiques representations & treatments of race, gender & class.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

Critical Studies Specialization Specific Learning Outcomes:

- (5) *Student demonstrates knowledge & ability to apply different theoretical perspectives on role & power of media within society to influence social values, political beliefs, identities & behaviors.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (6) *Student demonstrates him/herself to be knowledgeable of theoretical approaches to cinema (genre, auteurism, structuralism & post-structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminist, & postcolonial theories).* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (7) *Student demonstrates an understanding of the theory of auteurship & an overview of the dominant stylistic, thematic, & ideological features of the works of select major American & international auteur directors.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

Production Specialization Specific Learning Outcomes:

- (8) *Student demonstrates a standard skills-set in production management, directing, cinematography & editing for both film & TV.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (9) *Student demonstrates an advanced understanding of the production elements & narrative structures employed in film & TV.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (10) *Student is able to identify & effectively use the paradigmatic structure & features of a screenplay.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

## **2. How were they assessed?**

Prior to admission to the FVS program, students must take two (2) “gateway” courses: COM 201 “Media and Culture” and FVS 250 “Introduction to Film & Video Studies.” Students must pass these courses with a combined “B” average or better and have an overall CWU GPA of 2.4 or higher to be admitted to the FVS program. Once admitted, students are required to meet quarterly with their assigned academic advisor to monitor their progress and to ensure they are on track—academically (the 2.4 or higher GPA is also required to graduate with the FVS degree) as well as toward timely graduation with their respective specialization. In their final quarter at CWU, all FVS student learning outcomes are assessed as a component of the mandatory exit course taken by all graduating FVS

seniors (FVS 489 “Senior Colloquium”). Those students pursuing a minor in FVS are not part of this assessment process.

During the required exit course—along with seminar discussions &/or workshop sessions on establishing careers in film and television production or preparing for graduate film programs—students are expected to produce several documents aimed at assessing student learning outcomes in relation to the FVS programmatic goals. The primary method of assessment is the student portfolio that must include representative samples of student work from their tenure in the FVS program used to demonstrate competencies in both the shared as well as specialization specific learning outcomes. Unique to the Production Specialization, an important part of the portfolio is the student’s “sizzle” clip &/or “demo reel” presenting their production efforts in an industry standard format (online & DVD). Additionally, students are also required to complete a 9-12 page Exit Essay in which students are encouraged to be self-reflexive in reviewing their performance in the FVS program *vis-à-vis* student learning outcomes, to reflect upon specific courses they have taken and to cite specific works contained in their portfolio (or contained on their demo reel) that demonstrate competencies in the appropriate student learning outcomes.

During Finals Week each quarter, graduating seniors present their portfolios &/or demo reels to an open forum of FVS students and faculty and solicit informal feedback and field questions—frequently the result is the student making minor fixes &/or additions prior to submitting their materials for formal review. At least two FVS faculty (and the instructor for FVS 489) independently review the submitted portfolios and exit essays and provide feedback used to monitor the “state of the program.” Students are assessed on the completeness of their portfolio and the extent to which they have demonstrated meeting expected learning outcomes as well as the expectations of the FVS 489 course. A standardized form is employed for assessment purposes (see attached *FVS–Portfolio Assessment Form*) utilizing ordinal measurements for assessing student competencies in meeting learning outcomes and program goals (“does not meet,” “partially meets,” “meets,” or “exceeds”). Each of these ordinal categories is assigned a numeric value and the student’s “score” is computed (portfolio organization = 6 points possible, program goals = 9 points possible, and student learning outcomes = 30 points possible, for a total of 45 possible points). For purposes of program evaluation, a student must receive an overall score of 30 points or better with no single criteria rated zero to “pass” the assessment process and receive their “satisfactory” grade in the FVS 489 course.

Additional programmatic and student learning assessments took place during the 2011-12 academic year. One was the Academic Planning Task Force program review, the purpose of which was to optimize programs, enhance students’ academic experience and to focus resources on the highest priorities. Programmatic response to the APTF assessment report is included herewith (see attached *APTF–FVS Response* document).

The other was the CWU College Reading Across the Curriculum Assessment, the purpose of which was to help faculty determine how effectively students read course material, the clarity of student understanding of said material and how well students can summarize and demonstrate their understanding of what they read. Report on the assessment of FVS student reading will be briefly discussed below.

### 3. What was learned?

The FVS program is one of the fastest growing majors on campus with over 80 majors as of Spring 2012. The strength of the program resides in the shared core and strong offerings in the respective specializations (critical studies & production). For the specific courses that make up the FVS core, the average GPA dropped slightly to 2.7 (or, a B–) while the aggregate average GPA in major rose slightly to 3.0 (B average) to graduation. Likewise, students in the FVS major have exceeded the program criterion of achievement as reported in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan* (submitted in 2008)—“at least 90% of all portfolios &/or demo reels submitted for review are determined to ‘Meet’ or ‘Exceed’ expectations for graduation.”

Specifically, of the 22 students who submitted for graduation in the 2011-12 academic year (2 critical studies, 20 production), all but one successfully met expectations (95%). This academic year four students received an evaluation indicating “exceeded” expectations (a score of 40 or above out of 45) while 17 students received an evaluation of “meets expectations” (a score between 30-39 out of 45) and only one student “did not meet” expectations. Most graduating seniors scored “exceeds” expectations in two or more of the ten student learning outcomes. The one student who did not meet expectations failed to submit a complete portfolio &/or demo reel for review and was given an incomplete in FVS 489 in order to compile their portfolio, complete their demo reel and resubmit for evaluation (this has not yet happened as of this writing). Despite this individual incident, most students performed to expectations and, of the 21 seniors who graduated in 2012, five graduated with honors.

In reviewing the student portfolios it was demonstrated that of the 21 graduating students, seven presented at least one of their works at SOURCE 2012 and nearly all of the students participated in at least one student film/video festival &/or screenplay competition (several had multiple submissions). Of the works submitted for jury review, one student team (consisting of four graduating seniors) received accolades for “best directing,” “best screenplay,” “best male actor,” “best ensemble cast” and “best of festival” at the *48-Hour Film Slam*. Four graduating seniors were finalists in the *Coin Toss Screenplay Competition* with one taking first place honors—all four of their scripts were chosen for production by the COM 432 Directing class in Spring 2012. This equates to approximately 72% of graduating seniors presenting their work and more than doubles the expected level of achievement as reported in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan*—“At least 30% of senior majors present their work at a local, regional or national conference or film festival.” This is exclusive of the other six submissions to the *48-Hour Film Slam* (juried competition) and the eight short films screened at the *Apple Pie Film Festival*. Both of these events are held annually on campus for FVS students. Although these are not “seniors only” competitions, if student participation in these local events is factored into the equation, than the program has greatly exceeded expected minimums.

Reading Across the Curriculum

Twelve students enrolled in Spring Quarter’s FVS 489 “Senior Colloquium” were assessed for their reading rate and reading comprehension (see attached *FVS–Reading Assessment* instrument and report). Approximately half (5 of 12) of the students assessed were transfer students. The following table illustrates the results of the assessment.

<b>Rubric Element</b>	<b>Pass Native</b>	<b>Pass Transfer</b>	<b>Non-Pass Native</b>	<b>Non-Pass Transfer</b>
Reading Rate	6 / 50%	5 / 42%	N.A.	1 / 08%
Summary–Details	6 / 50%	5 / 42%	N.A.	1 / 08%
Summary–Discipline Specific Vocabulary	6 / 50%	5 / 42%	N.A.	1 / 08%
Summary–Author’s Intent	6 / 50%	5 / 42%	N.A.	1 / 08%

*n* =12.

Whereas one student fell below expectations in reading rate and comprehension (the individual is a student granted accommodation through DSS—more time for exams in a distraction free environment), three students had a reading rate over 300 wpm (good general reader) while eight scored between 190-300 wpm (average general reader). Although the average score was indicated as likely being “too slow for college,” actual student reading rates were within 10 words of 300 wpm and, thus, sufficient for college-level reading. Student text summary scores were assessed on the amount and kind of details students used in their written summaries as well as appropriate use of discipline specific vocabulary and whether or not they captured the author’s intent. Most students scored “pass” in all three areas of assessment.

Student Identified Program Strengths, Weaknesses & Opportunities

Although greatly improved over last year, problems getting into required courses that had overlapping schedules was still mentioned by a few students as the cause of some frustration—requiring several students to “wait out” a quarter for a needed class or to make up the course in summer session. As they worked their way through the program, several students desired more diversity of course offerings each quarter; thereby, providing options and choices. Most of the graduating seniors stated that they had, at one time or another, experienced difficulty in getting the courses they wanted (or needed) because they were not offered or conflicted with required courses.

All of the students expressed confidence that their education adequately prepared them for employment in the film/television industry—or, in the case of Critical Studies student, prepared them for graduate school. Representative of sentiments expressed by many students, one individual wrote in their exit essay that, “While some courses throughout my college career here at Central were review and some taught me things I had no interest in and still others introduced me to fresh concepts I had been longing to know, each course and experience broadened and enhanced my knowledge making me confident to call myself a multi-media professional.” Others echo this sentiment with statements while commenting on the faculty, “Never once did I feel that an instructor was simply lecturing from a book—every professor I had was a seasoned professional, speaking and teaching from personal experience and knowledge.” Although there were a few commented on the “Lazy Student” and a desire for tighter admission standards for the major, most of the feedback in this area (emphasized by students last year) took a different approach, one of suggesting a structured “cohort” for core classes in production so students have a

common foundation of skills-sets prior to advancing in the major. Other common themes in student feedback stressed a desire for new course offerings in cinematography and audio production; as one student stated, "...two glaring deficiencies in this program are in the areas of cinematography and audio... there are no classes in [cinematography] that teach you how to properly light a set/scene, use depth of field for dramatic effect, learn the deeper implications of color schemes in light... [nor are] there classes on audio and how to record clean, usable, junk free sound." Although the "usefulness" of the critical cinema studies courses were at times challenged—mostly because they were seen as taking away from much needed/desired production credits—there was the continued desire for instructors of critical cinema studies courses to more closely relate &/or discuss how to apply such knowledge to film/video production and in so doing, afford students a deeper understanding of how film history, theory, aesthetics and critique affect the "telling of cinematic stories." Equally sought-after were "dedicated" film courses as distinctly separate from broadcast journalism courses currently shared between FVS and COM.

Those majoring in Critical Studies saw things a bit differently. Whereas the common core afforded opportunities for students in the two specializations to mix, there was the desire for a closer connection to bridge the "rift" between the specializations—especially after students get into their specific specialization courses. Like the production students, the critical studies students held out high praise for the core faculty of their specialization and the breadth of course offerings—even if the frequency and quarterly distribution of offered courses was not always optimal. Also echoing their production specialization counterparts, critical studies students were "... happy with the class sizes which created the ability to connect with the FVS faculty... I felt, on countless occasions, that my strengths and weaknesses were recognized and addressed by my professors in a way that helped push me toward growth." Another student stated that, "One of the strengths of the FVS program is that I got to specialize in [critical studies], but also learn about production at the same time... The strength is that the student is able to choose from a variety of classes, especially when choosing electives."

What is becoming a perennial issue—equipment, or more specifically, the lack thereof—was the focus of quite a few comments. Whereas, improvements in the quality and quantity of equipment was acknowledged by most, demand for the production equipment (*e.g.*, cameras, lighting, audio, etc.) and access to post-production facilities (*e.g.*, the convergent media lab) created bottlenecks in the check-out process and restricted student access to the film editing facilities. Consistent with calls for courses in cinematography and audio production, some students specified the need for HDSLR cameras with prime lenses and digital recording devices that could be used to teach cinematographic concepts and techniques, improve the quality of student productions and more closely reflect the digital workflow many students would be expected to interface with in the industry. Several students stated that the FVS program desperately needed skilled technicians to check out/in the production equipment (rather than the existing Work Study students) with the knowledge necessary to keep said equipment in good repair and be available to assist students in post-production during evening hours when students are editing their assignments in the lab and instructional faculty are not available.

Strengths in the program reflect the quality, experience and dedication of the faculty in the FVS program, and noted earlier. About half of the students stated that they felt the required production management course was valuable (but, challenging!) and a necessary course in the production sequence and that the directing class should be offered more frequently (if not made a requirement). A few students felt the production sequence of classes should be longer; that, in order to have full confidence in their skills-set, they wanted more hands-on classes and felt a 2-year program of study was too short. Several students also stated that the introduction to studio production class was one of the more valuable introductory courses in the production sequence and should be offered more frequently while the two critical studies students wished there were two required courses in film theory and criticism; one introductory and the other more advanced and in-depth. As stated earlier, most students spoke highly of the depth and breadth of knowledge of the FVS faculty and the confidence they had in their degree in helping them to get a job or go on to graduate school. Praise was also offered for the regular email communications (and Facebook postings!) to majors informing students about film festivals, scholarships and internship opportunities. However, critical studies student wished for more information forwarded that appealed to their interests in film criticism, history and film theory.

#### **4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?**

Evaluating the student portfolios in juxtaposition to the program's student learning outcomes, it is readily apparent that nearly all of the graduating students display the necessary skills sets that match the learning outcomes and meet industry expectations. However, the FVS faculty will continue to monitor the relevance of the program's goals and student learning outcomes should programmatic adjustments be necessary.

As a result of student feedback, the FVS will continue to monitor course offerings and scheduling to, hopefully, mitigate conflicts that might adversely affect student time to degree before problems emerge. The use of a color coded matrix has greatly helped identify potential scheduling conflicts and pointed out the need to “re-order” the offering of certain required course in order to spread courses out more evenly over an academic year. An adjusted 2-year course rotation plan was worked out and, so far, we have been able to mitigate scheduling conflicts.

A new FVS specialization in scriptwriting was developed and courses officially offered in the 2011-12 academic year and we expect to see our first graduates with this specialization in 2013. Expansion of course offerings into other areas—like storyboarding, animation, cinematography and audio production— or offer more advanced courses on existing topics, are program options held “hostage” to staffing issues. The existing instructional staff, especially in the production specialization, is nearly “over capacity” and as student majors grow with the reputation of the FVS program, lack of faculty will likely be a primary obstacle to continued programmatic growth. Still, to address some of the concerns expressed in student exit essays (both last year and in 2011-12), the faculty have expanded offerings in the 1-credit COM 315 workshop courses to include studio equipment, field equipment and are developing similar workshop courses in audio recording & editing. Each course is an intensive, weekend workshop. Curriculum changes will soon be submitted that will make it a requirement to take 5-credits of these workshops as pre- or co-requisites along with the associated introductory production courses.

It is difficulty for any professionally oriented academic program to keep parity with industry standards, additional resources are constantly needed to just keep pace with student demand, let alone mirror industry trends. FVS has struggled to build production capacity in equipment that will afford students a “digital cinema” experience that will compliment the skills sets necessary to gain employment in the film and television industries. We have begun to explore opportunities to not only increase our equipment in terms of numbers of cameras, lighting kits and microphones, but to also increase the “quality” of the cameras, lighting and audio equipment available to students.

## **5. What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment information?**

Emphasis has been placed on following the agreed upon 2-year course rotation that was worked out earlier with the chairs of the English and Theatre departments (two of the three “anchor” departments supporting the major along with Communication) in order to more equitably spread courses out over the academic year, but to also to structure a more coordinated scheduling of courses within each quarter. Prior to the submission of each successive quarter’s departmental schedule, the FVS director coordinates with the chairs of Communication, English and Theatre to avoid (if possible) the overlap of required courses—this is already meeting with some success.

In response to overwhelming student demand, a new specialization in screenwriting was created utilizing existing courses (may were revamped) and the introduction of a few new courses. We presently have five students in this new specialization and expect this program to grow over time. Our first screenwriting specialization student will graduate Spring 2013.

Due to faculty initiative (& non-FVS student requests) we introduced a screenwriting minor that is already starting to attract students from Theatre and English who wish to add this skill-set to their major coursework. As a result of the concern expressed in the APTF report to “revise/reduce, refocus” the Critical Studies major (see attached *APTF-FVS Response* document), an ad hoc committee appointed last summer with the charge of exploring outreach and marketing options to boost student enrollment in this specialization have presented their report to the faculty for action. We expect to introduce some program changes in the present academic year based upon these recommendations.

## **6. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University:**

As has been the case every year, it has been difficult to find a consistent, coherent and meaningful (at least to this process) university mission or goal statement(s). For this exercise to have any usefulness or meaning beyond the program level, we need a single set of identified learning goals at the university level broad enough to be applied across colleges, departments and programs and shared with all for use in this process. Hopefully, present university strategic planning efforts will yield coherent and unified goal statement(s) from which to base future evaluations. Similar to past reports, I was forced to go with what was initially presented in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan Preparation Form* submitted in 2008.